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Introduction

Childhood is an extremely unique period in the life of every human being. During the childhood, small children are not prepared to function in the world at all, yet this period will affect their entire future life. Testament to the complexity of this period are the definitional considerations which need to be accounted for in the pedagogical construction of childhood, which in the *Encyclopedia of Childhood* runs to seven categories – the psychological, biological, sociological, historical, anthropological-cultural, political, and, finally, the legal.¹

The definition of childhood has been constantly evolving for centuries but now there are new proposals which are more compatible with the development of science² “Childhood is a sociological construct, created by children and for children – it is a biological fact which also has a social dimension (...). Children, as members of a society, may construct their own identity and influence the identity of others through their participation in educational dialogue. In this framework, the relationship between children and adults is based on reciprocity, love and the sharing of power and control.”³

Childhood, as with every other period of development, is and should be researched. But childhood research is special, inter alia in view of the dual legal status of the research subjects – children.⁴ This requires knowledge from the researcher of both

¹ *Encyklopedia dzieciństwa*: http://encyklopediadziecinstwa.pl/index.php?title=Main_Page; accessed: 27 VIII 2018.

² This is presented in an interesting manner by M. Szczepska-Pustkowska, *Od filozofii dzieciństwa do dziecięcej filozofii życia. Casus władzy (i demokracji)*, Impuls, Kraków 2011.

³ L. Marszałek, *Aksjologiczny kontekst dzieciństwa*, „Seminare”, 36 (2015) 3, s. 118–119; compare M. Karwowska-Struczyk, *Edukacja przedszkolna. W poszukiwaniu innych rozwiązań*, Wyd. UW, Warszawa 2012, pp. 35–36.

⁴ See M. Ciechowska, *Etyczne aspekty badań jakościowych*, in: M. Ciechowska, M. Szymańska, *Wybrane metody jakościowe w badaniach pedagogicznych*, Wydawnictwo AIK, Kraków 2018 and the literature supplied therein.

legal regulations⁵ as well as the ethical difficulties which may be related to them. The contemporary methodology of social science is extremely rich in the available ways to conduct research, both in quantitative and qualitative ways.

Childhood research may be conducted based on various paradigms and methods. If the researcher decides to embark on research with children (the participatory paradigm), it will not only be a methodological challenge, but it will also pose ethical and pedagogical questions. We hope that this edition of the journal will serve to outline the horizons of those research experiences.

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⁵ See J. Kusztal, *Dziecko wobec prawa w rodzinie, szkole*, in: *Dziecko zagrożone wykluczeniem. Elementy diagnozy, działania profilaktyczne i pomocowe*, red. K. Biel, J. Kusztal, Wydawnictwo WAM, Wyższa Szkoła Filozoficzno-Pedagogiczna Ignatianum, Kraków 2011.